

MWSS-274 Tests Its Skills, Makes Leatherneck Safer for Fellow Marines

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – Twenty one Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 274 finished a four-day, 24-hour operation to move an entire helicopter landing pad to a more remote location, April 15.

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Marines originally built Camp Leatherneck's VIP landing pad on what used to be the edge of the base, but the installation rapidly expanded to accommodate an influx of inhabitants and made the original location a potential safety risk.

The Marines used eight dump trucks capable of moving 5 cubic yards of material to remove a 5-foot deep layer of dirt from the new 90,000 square-foot landing pad. The devil dogs then trucked in 1,800 cubic yards of dirt and gravel, 1,100 from the old site and 700 from the flight line, and used a D-7 bulldozer and road grater to evenly spread the material.

As the Marines spread gravel onto the new pad – built with a slight slope to allow for water runoff – other support Marines moved and staged several dozen concrete barriers, six barriers at a time, at the new site.

"My guys really did a great job," said Webber, who is serving on his third combat deployment. "There were times when I had to force Marines to go home after their shifts were over because they wanted to stay and finish whatever task they had started."

Although MWSS-274 initiated the move to reduce the risk created by having helicopters land in such a densely populated area of Leatherneck, it turned into a valuable training opportunity.

"This was a great chance to watch my junior Marines fresh out of school and get a good idea of their skill level," said Gunnery Sgt. Justin Webber, a Havelock, N.C. native serving as the operations chief for MWSS-274.

The support squadron tested its ability to rapidly complete large scale missions while making Camp Leatherneck safer for its fellow Marines.